

Asian shares mixed, US futures fall as Iran talks make progress

HONG KONG, JUNE 22: Asian stocks were mixed Monday with markets in Japan and South Korea trading higher, while oil prices edged lower on fresh optimism over progress in US-Iran negotiations.

US futures were trading lower.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 jumped 1.6% to 72,364.82, after reaching a new all-time record of 72,831.73 during intraday trading, helped by technology stocks that were fuelled by excitement over the global artificial intelligence boom.

Japan's SoftBank Group, the multinational investment holding company with a strong AI focus, rose 2.4%. Chip equipment maker Tokyo Electron was up 2.3%.

South Korea's Kospi gained 0.4% to 9,084.37 and was trading near its record high levels, led by AI-related shares. Memory chip maker SK Hynix surged 4.7%.

Seeing another strong market today," Neil Newman, managing director and head of strategy at Astris Advisory Japan, said. He cautioned that the Japanese market is "probably getting a little stretched" from an investor's point of view, "es-



pecially with what's going on in the Middle East."

Hong Kong's Hang Seng lost 1% to 23,690.86, while the Shanghai Composite index was 0.2% higher at 4,098.01.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 was down 0.1% to 8,822.80.

Taiwan's Taiex rose 2.8%. India's Sensex was up 0.6%.

Oil prices fell as talks progressed over a permanent end to the Iran war. Brent crude, the international standard, was trading 1.4% lower to USD 79.42 per barrel. It was at

roughly USD 70 a barrel before the start of the war in late February.

High-level negotiations in Switzerland between the US and Iran concluded early Monday, with lower-level technical talks set for the rest of the week.

Meanwhile, while Iran said the Strait of Hormuz, a key waterway for oil and gas transport, was shut again over the weekend, the US said that traffic had continued.

"Moving towards a more permanent deal will be challenging, with very

real risks of a flare-up in hostilities," ING commodities strategists Warren Patterson and Ewa Manthey wrote in a commentary on Monday.

In the US, investors are also monitoring May's personal consumption expenditures price index, or PCE, the preferred inflation gauge of the Federal Reserve, which is due to be released this Thursday.

In other dealings, the US dollar rose to 161.68 Japanese yen from 161.22 yen. The euro was trading at USD 1.1454, down from USD 1.1473. (AP)

Petrol, diesel margins back above pre-conflict levels: Report

NEW DELHI, JUNE 22: Profitability at state-run oil marketing companies (OMCs) is set to improve as falling crude oil prices lift fuel marketing margins, although rising debt levels and uncertainty over fuel taxes could limit the sector's longer-term earnings outlook, according to a JP Morgan report.

Composite margins on petrol and diesel sales at state-run refiners and fuel retailers are now above levels seen before the recent Middle East conflict, with gains driven by lower crude prices and reduced central excise duties, it said.

The start of the West Asia conflict triggered a surge in global oil prices but retail pump rates in India remained steady for large parts and rising only by a fraction of the required increase. Even after the Rs 7.50 per litre increase in petrol and diesel prices in May, retail pump rates were lower than the cost. History

"Our estimates for OMC composite margins on petrol and diesel are now higher than pre-war levels. Losses on LPG are still elevated, but should also start to track oil down soon," JP Morgan said adding earnings in April-June - the first quarter of current fiscal year - will likely be hurt by large inventory losses, but 2Q profitability should be better.

"Two issues limit our excitement around this im-



provement in margins: the OMC will have acquired material debt during the last few months - affecting valuations, and a major part of the restoration of profitability is on account of the reduction in excise duties," it said. "It is possible that the government keeps taxes low for some time - permitting debt repayment at the OMC. The risk of an eventual increase in excise duties remains."

The Government had cut excise duty on petrol and diesel by Rs 10 per litre each in March to avoid an immediate increase in retail prices. The duties may be restored once global oil prices fall to pre-war levels and stabilise.

Among the three state-run OMCs - Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, Indian Oil Corporation and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited - BPCL and IOC are expected to benefit the most in the near term if oil prices continue to ease.

The brokerage estimated

that the current composite petrol and diesel margins for BPCL and IOCL are higher than pre-conflict levels, while HPCL's margins have largely returned to or exceeded levels seen before the recent oil price spike. The improvement reflects stronger combined refining and marketing economics, even as standalone fuel marketing margins remain below historical averages.

The stronger margin environment could support earnings from the second quarter onwards, particularly if crude prices remain below USD 80 per barrel and refining margins stay elevated.

However, first-quarter earnings are likely to remain under pressure due to inventory losses stemming from the recent decline in crude prices. Analysts also expect the three OMCs to report elevated borrowings after absorbing losses on the sale of petrol, diesel and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) over recent months.

While losses on LPG re-

main significant, they are expected to moderate as lower oil prices feed through to the sector.

A key factor behind the recovery in fuel margins has been the Government's decision to keep excise duties lower, allowing a larger share of retail fuel prices to accrue to OMCs. Analysts estimate the reduction in excise duties has cost the government roughly Rs 1.8 lakh crore annually in foregone revenue.

That has raised questions over the sustainability of current profitability levels.

The Government may allow OMCs to retain higher margins for some time to help reduce debt accumulated during recent periods of under-recovery, analysts said. However, pressure to raise fuel taxes could re-emerge, particularly as the Government faces higher expenditure commitments over the next two fiscal years.

As a result, JP Morgan expects OMCs could report strong earnings in the December and March quarters if crude prices remain subdued, but caution that visibility on fuel marketing margins beyond fiscal 2028 remains limited.

The sector is therefore likely to remain a tactical play tied closely to movements in crude oil prices and Government tax policy, with BPCL and IOC viewed as the preferred bets in the current environment. (PTI)

Reliance Industries shares climb nearly 3 pc as Jio files for IPO

NEW DELHI, JUNE 22: Shares of Reliance Industries climbed nearly 3 per cent on Monday after its digital unit Jio Platforms filed draft papers for what could become India's largest-ever initial public offering.

The rally was also bolstered after billionaire Mukesh Ambani unveiled a roadmap for the company's next phase of growth spanning artificial intelligence, satellite broadband, clean energy and consumer businesses at the company's 49th annual general meeting.

The bellwether stock rallied 2.75 per cent to Rs



1,345.45 on the BSE.

At the NSE, the stock edged higher by 2.70 per cent to Rs 1,344.90.

Rally in the blue-chip stock was also instrumental in driving the markets higher. The

30-share BSE Sensex traded 454.36 points higher at 77,253.07 in late morning trade. The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 136.05 points to 24,149.50. Jio Platforms, the telecom-to-technology

company that transformed India's digital landscape over the past decade, filed a draft red herring prospectus with market regulator SEBI on Friday for a fresh issue of up to 27 crore shares.

Sources familiar with the matter had said that the offering could raise about Rs 37,700 crore (USD 4 billion), valuing the company at roughly USD 137 billion.

The offering aims to unlock value from Jio Platforms, whose telecom arm has grown into the world's second-largest mobile operator by subscribers in a single country after China Mobile.

IHG Hotels & Resorts signs deal to develop 115-key Holiday Inn hotel in Mathura

MUMBAI, JUNE 22: IHG Hotels & Resorts on Monday said it has signed a management agreement with Embrassio Hotels & Resorts Private Ltd, the hospitality arm of Vrindara Group, to develop a Holiday Inn property in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh.

The hotel is scheduled to open in early 2030 and will offer 115 rooms and suites, the global hospitality company said in a statement.

"The signing of Holiday Inn Mathura aligns with our strategy of expanding in high-potential destinations and bringing globally recognised brands to locations where travellers are seeking trusted hospitality experiences," IHG Hotels & Resorts Managing Director South West Asia Sudeep Jain said.

IHG currently has 52 hotels operating across six brands in India and a strong pipeline of 98 hotels slated to open in the next 3-5 years.



Air India and digital travel platform Booking.com on Monday said they have partnered to offer travellers integrated booking experiences and exclusive rewards.

Under the collaboration, customers can now access a vast array of global accommodations through a dedicated co-branded platform on the Air India website and mobile app, powered by

Booking.com, along with exclusive benefits and loyalty rewards for Maharaja Club members, according to a statement.

"By combining Air India's growing global network with Booking.com's vast portfolio, we are offering our guests greater convenience, choice and added value across journeys," Air India Divisional Vice President and Head of Revenue

Management Abhijit Menon said.

Laura Houldsworth, Managing Director and Vice President, Asia Pacific at Booking.com, said, "By combining our diverse global accommodation inventory with Air India's growing international network, we are helping to make it easier for travellers to book their flights and stay in one place." (PTI)

Myntra widens lead in fashion, says BofA, Flipkart extends lead in Indian e-commerce

NEW DELHI, JUNE 22: Flipkart Group has widened its lead in India's e-commerce market and strengthened its dominance in online fashion through Myntra, according to a Bank of America Securities report that points to resilient consumer demand despite intense competition across the internet sector.

The brokerage, citing Sensor Tower daily active user (DAU) data and industry checks, said Flipkart remained the leading e-commerce platform by user engagement as of June 2026, while Myntra continued to pull ahead of rivals in fashion.

The findings suggest that competitive pressures in India's online retail market have yet to dent Flipkart's market position, even as rivals continue to invest heavily to gain share.

BofA said Myntra's leadership in fashion appears to be deepening, aided by relatively limited competition in premium fashion and beauty categories.

The brokerage noted that several competitors had sought to position themselves as credible challengers, but user engagement trends indicate Myntra continues to consolidate its advantage.

The report comes amid signs of improving consumer sentiment following a decline in global commodity prices after the US-Iran peace agreement.

BofA economists see eas-

ing inflationary pressures and improving macroeconomic conditions supporting consumption growth in the near term.

Shipment trends at third-party logistics providers, widely regarded as a real-time indicator of e-commerce activity, also point to sustained demand, the brokerage said.

"Till date, 3PLs have not seen any impact," the report said, referring to concerns that weaker discretionary spending could slow online retail growth.

BofA added that valuations across India's internet sector have corrected in recent months on fears of slowing growth and artificial-intelligence-led disruption, but said business performance has remained resilient.

The brokerage expects internet companies to be among the early beneficiaries of AI adoption, with gains likely to come through improved customer personalisation, engagement and cost optimisation rather than meaningful revenue uplift in the near term.

With consumer demand holding up and logistics volumes remaining robust, Flipkart Group appears well-positioned to capture any acceleration in spending as macroeconomic conditions improve, the report said. BofA said India's internet sector is showing few signs of a consumer spending slowdown, with online travel, quick commerce and

logistics businesses continuing to post resilient growth despite recent inflationary pressures.

The brokerage turned more constructive on the online travel segment after easing geopolitical tensions in West Asia and lower energy prices improved the macroeconomic outlook, while maintaining a positive view on quick commerce, third-party logistics and fintech platforms. "We are now more optimistic on the online travel sector as we see tailwinds, especially as domestic air capacity is added," the report said, reiterating "Buy" ratings on MakeMyTrip, Eternal, Swiggy, Delhivery and Paytm.

Industry and retail checks showed no visible slowdown in value-commerce spending or e-commerce parcel shipments, challenging investor concerns that softer discretionary consumption could weigh on growth.

For online travel platform MakeMyTrip, demand for eastbound international travel, hotels and ground transportation remained strong, although westbound travel and domestic air traffic were softer due to geopolitical disruptions and elevated airfares. Quick-commerce demand also remained robust, with competition helping sustain order growth.

BofA expects Eternal's quick-commerce business to deliver net order value growth of 16-17 per cent

quarter-on-quarter, driven by dark-store expansion, while Swiggy's growth could moderate as the company prioritises contribution-margin break-even.

In value commerce, the brokerage said checks indicated no slowdown in shipment volumes for Meesho, while logistics operators have not yet seen any impact on parcel demand from either value-commerce or broader e-commerce channels.

"Tech-logistics companies till date have not seen any impact from the slowdown in shipments led by either value-commerce or e-commerce," the report said.

Delhivery's express parcel business continues to benefit from increased outsourcing by Meesho, while its partial-truckload freight business is expected to maintain growth of more than 20 per cent year-on-year in the near term. BofA said. The brokerage also pointed out that growth momentum remains strong for fintech firms such as Paytm and PB Fintech, despite investor concerns over a potential review of insurance distribution commissions by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai). Meanwhile, hiring trends have remained largely stable for recruitment platform Naukri, while competition has intensified in the emerging instant home-services market following recent funding rounds by rival platforms.

NEW DELHI, JUNE 22: Indore-based Laxyo

Ltd, an integrated infrastructure and mining services company, on Monday said that it has expanded its operations in Africa and bagged a Rs 200-crore contract in Zambia.

The project, being executed through its subsidiary, Laxyo Evapeta Zambia Ltd, represents the company's first overseas raise-boring contract and currently accounts for 12.6 per cent of its total order book.

"Indore-based Laxyo Ltd, an integrated infrastructure and mining services player, has marked a significant milestone by expanding its operations into the African mining market through a Rs 200-crore raise boring contract at Mopani Mines in Zambia," the company said in a statement.

Raise boring is a modern underground mining technique used to create shafts and tunnels without using explosives. The method is widely preferred in under-



ground mining operations due to its superior safety standards, operational efficiency and ability to create critical infrastructure such as ventilation shafts and escape routes.

The Zambia contract marks an important step in Laxyo's international expansion strategy and places the company alongside established global raise boring specialists operating in African mining markets, including Master Drilling, Murray & Roberts and Redpath, the statement said.

Laxyo has already filed papers with market regulator Sebi seeking to raise up to Rs 150 crore through initial public offerings (IPO).

The fresh capital will be utilised for debt reduction, equipment acquisition and working capital requirements.

According to the company's Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP), the Indian raise boring market is expected to grow at a CAGR of approximately 27.3 per cent between FY25 and FY31, reaching an estimated

market size of Rs 575 crore.

The company's transition towards specialised, mechanised execution extends beyond mining services. Since its incorporation in 2007, Laxyo has evolved into a diversified infrastructure services company with four core business verticals - Railway Infrastructure, Mining Services & Raise Boring Operations, Dredging and Reclamation and Operation & Maintenance (O&M) services for industrial and thermal plants. (PTI)